Digital Government Review of Slovenia
Leading the digitalisation of the public sector

Key findings
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Barbara-Chiara Ubaldi – barbara.ubaldi@oecd.org
João Ricardo Vasconcelos – joao.vasconcelos@oecd.org
Benjamin Welby – benjamin.welby@oecd.org
Lucia Chauvet – lucia.chauvet@oecd.org

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1. Background

Building on recent progress to digitalise its public sector and conscious of the need to emphasise how digital transformation can strengthen national economic competitiveness and social wellbeing, the Government of Slovenia requested the OECD Directorate for Public Governance to develop a Digital Government Review.

The Digital Government Review of Slovenia builds on the experience and knowledge acquired by the Open and Innovative Government Division of the Directorate for Public Governance through similar projects conducted over the past 20 years in a number of OECD member and non-member countries. The Review is being conducted using the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014) as a framework of reference, which contains twelve key recommendations grouped in three main pillars (see Figure 1.1).

The analysis is framed by the six dimensions identified by OECD for countries to achieve digital government maturity (see Figure 1.2). The review evaluates the efforts made so far by the Slovenian government to progress in the development of e-government (e.g. to foster administrative simplification, debureaucratisation, simpler access to services) to enact a full shift towards a digital government approach, which is considered by the OECD members as a cornerstone of the path towards a digital transformation of the public sector that is capable of responding to the needs of digital economy and society (Figure 1.3).

Leading and framing the digital transformation of the public sector will enable Slovenia to fully benefit from digital technologies to foster a citizen and data-driven administration that can support the country’s journey towards a developed digital economy and a healthy digital society.

![Figure 1.1: OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies](https://example.com/figure1.1)

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**Non-OECD members**: Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Panama, Peru, Russia

This document presents the key findings formulated by the OECD peer review team, following a fact-finding mission to Ljubljana during October 2019, and covering these 4 areas of focus:

- Governance to lead the digital transformation
- Digital talent for a transformative public sector culture
- Service design and delivery
- Data-driven public sector

The views and findings expressed in this document will be further discussed and detailed in the final report of the Digital Government Review of Slovenia, to be presented in Spring 2021.

2. Contextual factors and institutional models

INTRODUCTION

In face of rapid and disruptive digital progress transforming economies and societies, countries around the world face the challenge of leveraging digital technologies and data across the public sector to spur productivity, design and deliver user and data-driven policies and services, and facilitate the day-to-day life of citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced this trend, highlighting the importance of investment in digital transformation to demonstrate the resilience, responsiveness and agility required of public sector organisations. Public sectors are expected to adjust quickly and continuously generate public value, by taking inclusive approaches. In order to enhance the digital transformation underway, government-wide cohesion is essential, driven by sound leadership, strategic coordination and the involvement of the ecosystem of stakeholders, enabling administrations to assure coherent and sustainable implementation of digital government policies. Building on the knowledge and experience of OECD member and non-member countries, the E-Leaders Handbook on Governance provides a framework to support policy makers and senior officials navigating the different models public sectors are adopting worldwide to lead, coordinate and implement their digital government policies (see Figure 2.1) (OECD, 2019).

The first facet of the E-Leaders Governance Framework – contextual factors – underlines that contextual analysis and knowledge of the overall environment are essential for finding institutional solutions that are adapted and relevant to the specific social, economic, political and cultural scenarios. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach for governance of digital government.

Figure 2.1. E-Leaders Governance Framework

Even though there are common features to the governance models that support and accelerate the digital transformation of public sectors, experiences across different OECD member and non-member countries show that what works in a specific country context cannot necessarily be replicated elsewhere. The mapping of contextual factors helps to gain a better understanding of specific aspects to be considered as potential obstacles or drivers of change and allows governments to establish the governance that better enforces and ensures better alignment with their digital government strategy.

The second facet of the E-Leaders Governance Framework – institutional models – focuses on the distinct types of institutional set up in place and how their different parameters impact and guide digital government policies, shedding lights on the different existing bodies, responsibilities and coordination mechanisms for digital government. Questions of leadership, portfolio and mandate are addressed, as well as the capacity to link different policy agendas and compliance across the administration.

The current chapter presents a first assessment and key findings applying the first two facets of the E-Leaders Governance Framework – contextual factors and institutional models – to the Slovenian digital government landscape.

Slovenia is a parliamentary republic benefiting from a stable geopolitical situation and good cross-border relations with its neighbouring countries. The country experienced more recently some political turbulence with governments not being able to finish their 4 years mandates. In this sense, policy continuity across political cycles is a critical concern in the public sector. In the OECD fact finding mission to Ljubljana on October 2019, several interviewed public sector organisations highlighted that new governments tend to discontinue projects and initiatives underway in the administrative, with negative sustainability consequences in mid and long term of policy action. The territory is administratively divided into more than 200 municipalities. Although the sub-national administration benefits from considerable autonomy, the central government based in the capital Ljubljana...
is responsible for a wide policy portfolio, qualifying the
country as administratively centralised when compared
with the overall OECD countries experience.

The fact that Slovenia is a member of the European
Union (EU) since 2004 represents a central contextual
factor deeply influencing its digital government policy.
During at least the last two decades, with the strong
objective of developing a European digital single market,
the EU has applied large efforts for the development of
e-Government/Digital Government policies across its
member states. The European cooperation in this area is
intense involving exchange of knowledge but also joint
development of standards, funding of digital government
building blocks (e.g. digital identity, interoperability)
that can allow public sectors to provide citizens and
businesses with mature digital services.

Slovenia is deeply involved in the EU cooperation in the
areas of digital government and information society,
benefiting from this strong external stimulus created
across these policy work streams. The country’s active
participation in the European strategies, initiatives
and projects positively shapes the national digital
government policy and is consensually considered
an asset by the stakeholders interviewed during the
OECD fact-finding mission to Ljubljana on October
2019. Additionally, the fact that Slovenia is a relatively
administratively centralised country, considered by its
ecosystem as being small in population when compared
with European and OECD peers, can provide a policy
asset. Since Slovenia has the capacity to “move fast
and be agile” on digital government policy design and
implementation, the country’s government and its
public sector should progressively consider embracing
and implementing a more proactive and positive policy
approach that understands the country’s dimension as a
comparative advantage.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AND DIGITALISATION
CONTEXT

As highlighted above, understanding, considering
and leveraging the socio-economic, technological and
geographic context of a country is fundamental for
a sound digital government policy. The governance
in place needs to take into account fundamental
contextual factors such as the overall economic climate,
the levels of digitalisation within the population and
adooption of digital public services, the coverage and
development of IT infrastructures, but also the regional
variances and the heterogeneity of local economies.

When observed from a perspective of social-economic
indicators, such as the level of household income and
wealth for instance, Slovenia performs below the OECD
average (OECD, 2017[3]; OECD, 2020[4]). Nevertheless,
as the vast majority of OECD member countries and
EU member states, Slovenia has an unquestionable
developed country status ranking 24th on the UN
Human Development Index (UNDP, 2020[5]). This social-
economic wealth of the country is reflected on the
level of digitalisation. Although Slovenia is below the
OECD average in several digitalisation indicators (e.g.
fixed and mobile broadband penetration, senior and
low income internet users, ICT investment intensity,
ICT patents), the country presents a typical developed
economy digitalisation profile (OECD, 2020[6]).

The same assessment can be applied when considering
more specifically the level of digital interactions of
the Slovenian population with public services. In 2019,
53% of individuals aged 16-74 years in Slovenia used
the internet to interact with public authorities, ranging
from simply obtaining information from government
websites to interactive procedures where completed
forms are sent via the Internet. But when considering
the percentage of individuals using the Internet to
send filled forms via public authorities websites, the
Slovenian percentage drops to 21% within a context of
38% EU average (OECD, 2020[6]).

The socio-economic and digitalisation context of
Slovenia provides substantial room for improvement
on the country’s performance when compared with
OECD and EU peers. Building on the consensus
for change that exists among the ecosystem of
stakeholders, a political moment can be created for
a wide and ambitious digital development agenda
for the country. In order to enhance the benefits of
the digital transformation of the public sector, the
Slovenian government should build on this social
and economic digital eagerness and create a sense of
urgency leveraging the current digital disruptiveness to
strengthen the country’s economic development and
social wellbeing.
The clarity, stability and simplicity of the institutional model that supports priorities of digital government is a foundational element for good policy leadership, coordination and implementation. Established roles and duties agreed and recognised across the administration are critical for consistent, coherent and sustainable digital change. The existence of a public sector organisation responsible for guiding and coordinating digital government policies is a central element of governance analysis. Considering the different contextual factors, namely the country’s institutional culture and legacy, this public sector organisation needs to be properly located in the government structure, benefit from a clear political mandate and be equipped with the human and financial resources that can enable it to be a real driver of change across the different levels and sectors of government.

OECD member and non-member countries experiences are very diverse regarding the institutional shape this leading public sector institution can have. Some countries locate this institution in the centre of government (e.g. Chile, France or the United Kingdom), others drive the digital government policy through a co-ordinating ministry such as finance or public administration (e.g. Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Sweden) or through a line ministry (e.g. Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg). The leading public sector institution can also have different institutional shapes such as a public sector agency approach (e.g. Denmark, Portugal, United Kingdom), an unit, office or directorate (e.g. Colombia, Korea) or a political level ranking authority such as a Minister or Secretary of State (e.g. Brazil, Estonia or Greece).

In Slovenia, the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) is responsible for the digital government national policy and holds a cross-cutting leadership function in the different levels and sectors of government. The Ministry develops its coordination in line with the State Governmental Council of Informatics Development in Public Administration (see Section Coordination and Compliance). Within the Ministry, the Information Society and Informatics Directorate led by a Director General is responsible for the wide executive coordination and implementation of the digital transformation of the public sector policy. The Information Society and Informatics Directorate leads important digital government initiatives across the administration in areas such as digital identity, interoperability and digital service delivery (see Chapters 3 and 4). There is a wide recognition of MPA’s mandate across the digital government ecosystem of stakeholders observed during the OECD fact-finding mission in October 2019 and also demonstrated in the OECD Digital Government Survey of Slovenia (OECD, 2020[7]). Nevertheless, as mentioned in the section Overall Political and Administrative Culture and Structure, some lack of policy continuity across political cycles was identified as a critical concern by the interviewed public sector institutions during the OECD fact finding mission to Ljubljana in October 2019. Several stakeholders highlighted that new governments tend to discontinue projects and initiatives underway, with clear negative consequences on the sustainability of policy action and results.

A broad consensus was found about the need of further empowering the Ministry of Public Administration to effectively lead the digital government policy of Slovenia across different sectors and levels of government. Additional policy levers seem to be required to secure effective policy implementation (see Chapter 3), as well as political support that is more resilient to government cycles in terms of continuity, consistency and sustainability. The Government of Slovenia could consider reinforcing the country vision and analytical thinking around the digital transformation of the public sector to support such a policy. Further clarification and communication of the role of digitalisation of the public sector for improved citizen trust, social wellbeing and inclusive economic wealth, and better connecting with different ongoing agendas elsewhere in the public sector, can support the civil service to embrace and enhance the digital disruptiveness underway.
COORDINATION AND COMPLIANCE

A cooperative and collaborative culture across the public sector is fundamental to securing appropriate policy coordination mechanisms for coherent policy design, development, delivery and monitoring. Institutional coordination helps to avoid siloed policy action, prevent policy gaps and mismatches, encourage the interchange of opinions, mobility of skills and sharing practices, and enable synergies between public sector stakeholders. Sound institutional coordination also supports a shift from agency-thinking and government-centred methods to system-thinking approaches in policymaking and implementation capable of being synchronised with the expectations and needs of citizens and businesses (OECD, 2019[2]).

In line with the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014[1]) and the diverse experiences and practices of OECD member and several non-member countries, successful coordination approaches typically rely on two stages of cooperation: a high-level cooperation and management, putting together ministers or secretaries of State, and ensuring extensive collaboration and supervision of the digital government strategy. Alongside this high-level cooperation, an organisational and technical cooperation system is also needed to address execution difficulties and bottlenecks (OECD, 2016[8]).

In Slovenia, the Governmental Council of Informatics Development in Public Administration, led by the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA), is responsible for the strategic leadership of the digital government policy (OECD, 2019[9]). The Council has a threefold structure:

- **Strategic Council** – led by the Minister of Public Administration, the council is responsible for coordination and control of deployment of digital technologies in the public sector, review and approval of the strategic orientations, confirmation of action plans and other operational documents and validation of projects of line ministries above a certain threshold (see Section Financial Measures and Mechanisms)

- **Coordination working group** – led by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration, the coordination workgroup is responsible for the preparation of proposals and action plans, coordination as well as compliance of digital government measures in line ministries and other public sector organisations.

- **Operational working group** – led by the director of the Information Society and Informatics Directorate, the operational working group is responsible for the implementation of activities, preparation and implementation of operational documents and work reports based on action plans. Provides its consent to line ministries and government services to all projects or activities that result in the acquisition, maintenance, or development of IT equipment and solutions.

The formal coordination and compliance structure for the digital government policy of Slovenia has a design that positively allows different levels of coordination and the distribution of responsibilities seems to be clear and generally well defined. Nevertheless, despite offering effective horizontal cooperation, recent years have identified critical weaknesses. The lack or even inexistence of Strategic Council meetings of the since April 2018 until the writing of this paper compromises the necessary coordination that can secure the coherence and sustainability of the digital government policy. In fact, the majority of Slovenian public sector organisations that answered the OECD Digital Government Survey confirmed that there is no regular coordination with MPA on digital government policies and initiatives.

In this sense, improving the coordination of this policy area could be considered a priority in Slovenia in order to contribute to centralised assurance of digital solutions, processes and services. Given the consensus found across the ecosystem of stakeholders on the importance of further developing the digital transformation of the public sector, there is an opportunity for the Slovenian government to explore greater permanence and continuity for fundamental mechanisms of coordination such as the meetings of the Council. This can be supported by increasingly mobilising champions across the public, business and civic sectors where there was great willingness to be involved further.
3. Policy levers to lead the digital transformation

INTRODUCTION

Having the proper political support, an empowered leading public sector organisation and the right institutional coordination mechanisms for policy development are critical dimensions for strong and resilient governance of digital government, as highlighted in Chapter 3. But effective and efficient policy implementation requires also having different policy tools in place that can guide, align and enforce coherent and sustainable efforts across the public sector.

Based on the experience of the OECD Working Party of Senior Digital Government Officials (E-Leaders) contained in the E-Leaders Governance Handbook (OECD, 2019[2]), policy levers – soft or hard – are tools that can be used by governments as means of action to achieve system-wide change. Effective and concrete instruments that governments can develop for cohesive and durable policy implementation, rationalising efforts and enabling synergies within the administration and with the broader ecosystem of digital government stakeholders. Policy levers are also fundamental for promoting the use of key enablers across the administration and securing the proper monitoring and impact assessment of policy efforts underway, boosting public sector digital maturity (OECD, 2019[3]).

The current chapter presents a first assessment after the fact finding mission to Slovenia in October 2019, applying the third facet of the E-Leaders Governance Framework – policy levers – that foresees four dimensions: 1) strategy, 2) management tools, 3) financial measures and mechanisms and 4) Legal and regulatory frameworks.

STRATEGY

The complex and diverse machine of government requires a digital government strategy that sets the vision, aligns objectives, defines priorities and structures the right lines of action to be adopted across the administration. The strategy should be able to reflect the political agenda in place for the digitalisation of the public sector, mobilising the different sectors and levels of government around a common policy purpose. The document should make the necessary bridges with other public governance agendas (e.g. innovation, open government, administrative modernisation, integrity), or broader policy priorities in place (e.g. sustainable development, science and technology, education, wellbeing, environment) in order to foster policy coherence and a systems thinking vision, culture and practice across the public sector. The design and delivery of the strategy are fundamental opportunities to concretely implement principles of openness and public engagement. These processes can enable collaboration with the broader ecosystem of digital government stakeholders such as the private sector, academia or civil society, securing the alignment with its needs and expectations, but also act as an inclusive mechanism of shared ownership and joint responsibility for the policy agenda.

Practically all OECD members countries have a digital government strategy in place setting the policy objectives for the digital transformation of the public sector (OECD, 2019[4]). Although the denomination can vary (e.g. strategy, agenda or action plan), and it can be presented as a stand-alone document or part of broader public sector strategies (e.g. public administration, digital economy, information society), the critical point for governance analysis is the existence of such policy documents. More than ambitious statements, these documents set the vision and frame the national/federal policy around digital government over a given period.

In Slovenia, the digital government policy is covered in the Public Administration 2020 – Public Administration Development Strategy 2020 and by the Digital Slovenia 2020 – Development Strategy for the Information Society until 2020. With a 2015-2020 timeframe, the Public Administration 2020 strategy prioritises critical elements of digital government development such as integrated digital services for citizens and businesses, IT management, development of common building blocks, digital skills and fostering the use of technologies such as cloud computing and data analytics across the public sector (Ministry of Public Administration, 2015[5]). Besides
The two strategies present a reasonable complementarity, defining action-oriented priorities and also the financial resources foreseen for their implementation. The ecosystem of stakeholders interviewed during the OECD fact-finding mission to Slovenia in October 2019 and that responded to the OECD digital government survey showed great awareness of the strategies in place. The ecosystem also confirmed that the strategies were elaborated in collaboration with other public sector institutions. Nevertheless, when questioned about the relevance of the strategies for their public sector organisation (e.g. mandates, alignment with institution’s goals, etc.), the vast majority of the respondents to the OECD Digital Government survey consider it “moderate” or “weak” (OECD, 2020). In this sense, there seems to exist space to better connect the strategies in place with the concrete priorities, needs and worries of Slovenian public sector institutions.

Considering that both strategies are now reaching their temporal term, an opportunity is emerging to involve the ecosystem of stakeholders on potential new strategies to be developed in this area, with the goal to secure their full relevance in relation to specific institutional needs or priorities of policy areas. This is essential if Slovenia aims to ensure that digital government enhances the digital transformation of the public sector.

**MANAGEMENT TOOLS**

Coherent investment in digital technologies and use of management models across the public sector are critical to optimise efficiency and avoid duplication of efforts and expenditures. These policy levers promote streamlined policy implementation aligned with the digital government strategy in place and enable improved sustainability for the initiatives and projects underway. Standardised business cases, for instance,
encourage value creation as they help to frame the
advantages of policy action and improve monitoring
capacities across the administration. Standardised
and agile project management helps to build common
organisational and administration grounds for
the different digital government initiatives being
implemented and consistent adjustment capacity to
face rapidly changing contexts. Specific procurement
policies and frameworks for digital technologies allow
important savings and efficiency gains, help make
purchasing consistent with overarching strategic
objectives, generate transparency, and promote the
involvement of providers through commissioning
approaches (GDS & OECD, 2019[13]; OECD, 2019[17]).

The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital
Government Strategies (OECD, 2014[1]) has specific key
recommendations that underline the value of business
cases and agile project management methodologies, as
well as the strategic procurement of digital technologies.
Although with different approaches in terms of
standardisation and enforcement, the use of these
three policy levers is relatively common in the digital
government policy context of OECD countries (OECD,
2019[10]).

In Slovenia, the further development of these policy
levers and their positive impact for a coherent and
sustainable digital government in the country is
commonly recognised and supported by the ecosystem
digital government stakeholders. The Methodology
of project management in the state administration – IT
projects and the IT investments approval process by
the Council of Informatics Development in Public
Administration demonstrate the efforts underway for
coherent management of digital technologies initiatives
and projects. Nevertheless, the existence and current
applicability of these tools is not clear to the majority
of public sector organisations that answered the
Digital Government Survey of Slovenia, namely when
referring to standardised business cases and project
management models (OECD, 2020[19]). Regarding the
procurement of digital technologies, the centralised
formal process for the approval of investments by the
mentioned Council supports efficiency and coherence
across the administration. But considering the identified
lack of Council meetings since April 2018 (see Section
Coordination and Compliance), guaranteeing strategic
and coherent procurement of digital technologies in
the Slovenian public sector is a challenge promptly
recognised by the Ministry of Public Administration
and the broader ecosystem of digital government
stakeholders.

In order to improve standards and assurance for
coherent digital government there is an opportunity
for Slovenia to consider reinforcing and, if necessary,
creating the necessary conditions for applying these
three policy levers – business cases, agile project
management and strategic procurement of digital
technologies – to strengthen the coordination capacities
of the Ministry of Public Administration and enable a
more cohesive digital transformation of its public sector.

**FINANCIAL MEASURES AND MECHANISMS**

Institutional frameworks for the allocation of financial
resources that can promote and secure policy
implementation are also important policy levers that
governments can use to support digital government
development. For instance, the capacity of the public
sector institution that leads the digital government
policy of the country to influence the national budget
is an extremely valuable asset to guarantee the
prioritisation and coherent implementation of public
sector digitalisation. Moreover, the existence of a budget
threshold determining that, above a certain financial
value, digital government expenses need to be centrally
pre-evaluated is also a clear instrument for securing
efficient and strategic use of existing resources and
coherently bringing public sector policy actions into
line with overarching priorities. Funding or co-funding
mechanisms to support digital government initiatives and
projects in different sectors and levels of government can
also support coherent and efficient policy implementation
simultaneously assuring the dissemination of standards
and key enablers that act as building blocks for a cohesive
digitalisation of the public sector.

The experience of OECD countries varies considerably
regarding the existence of the mentioned financial
measures and mechanisms. Nevertheless, there is a
common acknowledgement across the members of the
Working Party of Senior Digital Government Officials
(E-Leaders) that these kind of hard policy levers can
play a decisive role in the strategic promotion, effective
enforcement and cross-cutting monitoring of policy implementation.

Although there is a general recognition of the relevance for this kind of approach to support the implementation of the digital government strategy, the effective use of budgetary or funding policy levers in Slovenia is currently limited. The most relevant example refers to the existing threshold of 20 000 EUR (without tax) for digital government investments. The Strategic Board of the Council of Informatics Development in Public Administration is responsible for evaluating ICT expenses above the mentioned value, promoting in this sense integrated and cohesive policy efforts for the digital transformation of the public sector. But as mentioned above (section Coordination and Compliance), the absence of Strategic Council meetings since April 2018 until the writing of this paper compromises the current effectiveness of this policy lever in Slovenia.

Further developing financial measures and mechanisms in Slovenia should be increasingly considered as an adequate response to the need of further empowerment and coordinating capacities of the Ministry of Public Administration for strengthening its leadership of the digital government policy.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS (INCLUDES DIGITAL RIGHTS)

The fast pace of digital change nowadays requires permanent efforts by governments to keep their legal and regulatory frameworks updated. Since policy actions need to be strongly backed by clear laws and regulations that can guarantee principles such as openness, accountability, proportionality and impartiality, together with an unquestionable respect of citizens and businesses rights, governments’ agility and responsiveness to institutionally navigate the rapid changes underway are some of the critical challenges of the digital age. Legal and regulatory frameworks should enable digital opportunities to be seized and risks tackled, avoiding creating bureaucratic friction to the transformation of economies and societies, minimising risks and maximising benefits.

OECD countries have progressed a lot in the last decades through the establishment of digital rights, the formal recognition of digital artefacts such as documents or signatures, the reinforcement of personal data protection and cybersecurity legal frameworks or the increasing regulation on data governance (OECD, 2016[8]). Depending on the institutional culture of their public sector, some countries have more legalistic cultures and others follow more consensus-based approaches.

Slovenia developed broad efforts during the last decades to progressively adapt its legal and regulatory framework to the digital transformation underway. Benefiting from the European Union regulation stimulus, important steps were taken for instance in the areas of digital signatures, access to public sector information, privacy and data protection, digital security or sharing of government data within and across the public sector. Nevertheless, weaknesses in legal and regulatory approaches are commonly pointed out as obstacles for government digital maturity. Public stakeholders that answered the OECD Digital Government Survey of Slovenia identified the need to simplify the legislation, update areas such as digital identity or trust services and improve communication to reinforce its cohesive application (OECD, 2019[9]).

Beyond continuing efforts to keep the relevant legal and regulatory framework properly updated, Slovenia should further explore the development of an agile and experimentation-driven culture properly linked and driven by the digital government strategy to address change in the public sector that can counterbalance the established legalistic approaches. This requires persistent efforts to gradually change the mindset of public officials towards innovation-oriented and life-long learning approaches that can test and rapidly adjust to the current face pace of change. On the other hand, updating the legal and regulatory framework using a digital rights angle can also guarantee better alignment with citizens and businesses needs and expectations. Considering the progressive penetration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence in public sector processes and services, and the adoption of data-driven approaches, issues of digital consent, ethical use of data or algorithm transparency increasingly require governments to consider this third generation of digital rights as a requisite for a digitally-enabled state (OECD, 2019[9]; Ubaldi et al., 2019[10]; OECD, 2019[11]).
4. Digital talent for a transformative public sector culture

INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital transformation, where social changes lead to modifications of workplace, work content and the technology used, governments are facing a pressing need to prepare civil servants with the proper digital skills to support, navigate and implement such transformation as well as to achieve high digital maturity to attract and retain talents in the public sector. Across OECD member countries and non-member countries, there are many reasons that explain the absence of a much-needed strategy for digital skills that responds to new demands such as limited awareness of its importance about the leadership, on budget restrictions. However, there is a growing emerging need for building on existing capabilities and targeting shortages becomes a priority in order to maintain high quality public services and trust from citizens.

The digitalisation of our economy and society, such as tax collection, public sector communication and management of citizen services and planning, have created demand for a host of different digital skills and competencies necessary to run a successful digital government. This means that it is necessary to equip the public workforce with skills and competencies that empower them to quickly adjust and be efficient in their environment. Identifying, and ensuring, the right digital skills and competencies are critical for developing services that can adapt and respond to citizens’ needs.
Technical skills not only are skills needed to build digital services and use platforms, but are also associated with ‘new’ digital professions that support the fundamental changes needed in the public sector to sustain the digital transformation (e.g. data scientist, user researcher, service designer, product manager) and reimagined ones (business analyst, delivery manager). Due to the crosscutting nature of skills, digital skills apply at every level within the public sector, from experts to leadership roles, especially softer aspects of digital capacity, such as flexible managerial skills, adaptability skills and meta-learning skills.

The OECD peer review team observed during the OECD fact-finding mission, a lack of collaboration between different sectors of the government to create synergy. Some lack of political continuity between recent governments may have affected the stability of leadership, and may also have weakened collaboration ties within the government (See Section Coordination and Compliance). The project of centralisation through GOV SI (see Chapter 5) shows a willingness to unify, collaborate and communicate across sectors with its success benefiting from having clarity of vision and commitment of leadership. A strong leadership would then facilitate the development of a digital culture, leading to a solid digital workforce equipped with reliable digital skills.

Many stakeholders revealed that they were often under resourced due to a lack of IT skills and operating in environments with low digital maturity, which constrained the agility of their teams. Although courses and workshops are offered at the Administration Academy, the identification of skills needed for each role seems vague and the motivation from civil servants to learn new skills varies between institutions. As a result, teams are overloaded with administrative and management tasks, such as those associated with procurement.

Many institutions are concerned with their limited financial resources, which may result in losing their talented staff to the private sector and being unable to compete in replacing them. Not only is the salary of a civil servant not as attractive as in the private sector, but also the recruitment system of the Slovenian government constrains institutions to hire a limited number of talents every year, which is a structural challenge for the country. In addition to this, neither job mobility seem to be considerably encouraged, nor job profiles are well defined, thus civil servants’ incentive to reskill or upskill their digital skills is critical and this does not make public service roles attractive to top talents.

There is therefore not only a lack of skills but also a gap in strategic human resource management. To address these issues, many OECD countries have prioritised, among others, a focus on strengthening collaboration across sectors and levels of government in a digital environment, equipping civil servants with digital skills and competencies to work in multi-disciplinary teams, in an agile environment, and attracting and maintaining digital talents. The Slovenian government may consider developing a similar action plan for a success digital transformation.

PUBLIC SERVICE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

As addressed in Chapters 1 and 2, a clear digital government vision and strategy of a country is crucial for the development of workforce’s synergy, skillsets and career paths, and most importantly for an efficient digital transformation of its public sector. This is why establishing an environment that welcomes collaboration and enables the development and practice of digital skills is necessary to strengthen the government’s ability to respond to citizens’ increasing and evolving expectations towards public services.

In Slovenia, considerable political changes happened in the past decade, which has possibly affected the setup of a digital culture to steer and coordinate across the structure. In line with the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014[1]), the experience of several OECD member and non-member countries also shows that a clear vision articulated by strong leadership is highly important in promoting a change of environment and establishing a work culture focused on digital practices.

During the OECD mission to Slovenia, the team noticed some important efforts are being made to centralise information under GOV SI and services under eUprava,
Although this initiative is a great opportunity for collaborating and deepening synergy between institutions, a lack of engagement as often observed resulting in the perspective of such an initiative as a top-down decision instead of an invitation to a joint one. A strong leadership with a clear and forward-looking vision could then help to establish goals and behaviours that strengthen collaboration across sectors within the workplace.

Given the progressive use of digital technology across government institutions, there is also a need to consider embracing a more receptive workplace to digital settings and lifelong learning. This comes with an environment fostering digital experimentation, application of new digital skills, change of mindset by putting the human in the centre of the strategy, focusing on the evolving needs and reiteration of job profiles and descriptions. This more strategic role of leaders could enable the development and growth of a more digital workforce to adapt to an increasingly digital society.

PUBLIC SERVICE DIGITAL TALENTS

In light of the change in the nature of work of the public sector, it became essential to identify, train and equip civil servants with digital skills that would enable them to complete their job best and deliver high quality public services. Following OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014), many OECD member and non-member countries demonstrate a willingness to achieve further digital maturity also by prioritising institutional capacities into building a digitally skilled workforce. In 2019, the Government at a Glance publication found that around 61% of OECD countries (22 out of 36) have civil-service-wide training strategies or action plans, which is an increase from slightly less than half in 2016 (OECD, 2019).

In Slovenia, the Ministry of Public Administration through the Administration Academy took the initiative of addressing the digital skills and competencies gap by providing training to public servants. The Administration Academy outsources trainers and offers rudimentary training skills such as word processing, internet navigation, email communication and spreadsheet programmes in order to provide the workforce with basic skills. The Academy also collaborates with universities experts to develop new training programs with different modules targeted at different groups of public servants for the development of digital skills including Data Science for beginner, Business Intelligence, machine learning as well as Open Data management. However, the Academy does not seem to have in-house trainers to promote courses within their workforce, as they reported enrolment being very low.

During the fact-finding mission, the OECD peer review team noted that although many stakeholders recognised...
the lack of IT skills and more generally the lack of digital skills within the public sector, little showed interest in joining and applying for training and courses. The team later circulated a survey and results revealed that only 25% of respondents expressed concerns about their digital skills and were highly motivated to participate in trainings (OECD, 2020[7]). Some other participants consider digital skills as “good to have” but do not see them as “required”, as they believe they can “learn by doing”, and that only “big projects” require these skills. Consequently, the low motivation led to more demand for external provision of services, which not only creates a lack of internal skills but also results in teams to be overloaded by more administrative and managerial tasks than technical ones. This practice puts at risk the capacity to control and understand what is being developed, and to cooperate with other teams as the lack of internal skills restricts the flexibility to operate in an agile way.

After setting up a favourable work environment with a clear vision for digital transformation, the Slovenian government could now prioritise investing in training, people and infrastructures across all level of the institutions to enable services to be developed in-house, increase ownership of products and services as well as multidisciplinary collaborations across sectors and institutions. This includes building trainings internally to focus on the area of user centricity and emphasise on soft skills, digital delivery skills, design thinking and end user experience, which are specific to the public sector needs. A digitally matured work place will thus condition the creation of a digitally skilled workforce.

**PUBLIC SERVICE RECRUITMENT OF TALENTS**

In order to align with the vision of a country, governments can decide to hire people through different types of employment contracts (OECD, 2019[17]). The most common distinction is the permanent public servant status and the contractor status, where pay, job security, performance evaluation and access to training differ. These employment modalities very often affect the efficiency in attracting and sustaining talents as well as motivating them to give their best to create high quality public services. With a clear and well-balanced structure, this can give governments the flexibility to develop and manage their workforce with the proper range of skills. However, if the employment modalities are not used well, public services being developed can be put at risk (OECD, 2019[17]).

Most OECD countries revealed a preference for employing public servants in the central government administrations in 2019 (OECD, 2019[17]). The policymakers acknowledged that main challenges are to continuously assess skills and competencies needed in the public sector (OECD, 2017[18]) in order to prioritise hiring and maintaining talents in house over outsourcing, particularly in areas with skills shortage.

During the OECD fact finding mission to Slovenia in October 2019, many public sector institutions shared their concern about having a limited fund and limited the number of staff they can hire every year. As a result, teams are not able to replace talents and are under-resourced, therefore can only rely on external talents. Although outsourcing is financially more costly than hiring a new talent, due to the structuring policy, this seems to be the only alternative to innovate. On top of that, the organisational structure does not seem to allow mobility of the workforce between sectors, which may also explain the fear in public sector organisations of losing talents to more flexible and attractive career paths, more generous salary packages and benefits in the private sector. The public sector talent management system of the Government of Slovenia does not seem to offer much mobility and thus decreases the incentive to professional growth.

However, some measures could be taken in order to identify, attract and retain the top talents. Given the job market options, it is necessary for governments to position themselves as attractive employers, giving candidates the chance to develop their career while serving society. They may consider developing accurate job profiles and descriptions, as this gives employers the chance to paint a clearer picture of the roles available. The Government of Slovenia may also consider adjusting its recruitment efforts and use creative ways to reflect the organisational culture and values, such a gamification of skills assessments. In today’s environment, digital maturity and agility of a work place are important selection criteria for strong candidates, thus re-thinking their reward system, salary package, career paths and mentorship plan could equally contribute to making the work place more attractive.
5. Service design and delivery

The transformation of our daily lives is increasing expectations about the quality of the experiences we have with private suppliers, and in turn, with government. OECD countries are increasingly acknowledging the importance of design in the quality of the services government delivers and Slovenia is no different in wanting to achieve a public sector that maximises the opportunities of the digital age to reduce the burden and cost of interactions between citizen and state while increasing satisfaction, effectiveness and trust.

The OECD’s conceptual framework for analysing the design and delivery of public services (Figure 5.1) identifies three areas that inform and shape their quality. First, the context in terms of representative and organisational politics, the history of channel strategies, technology and infrastructure and finally, societal and geographic factors. Second, the service design and delivery philosophy in terms of leadership, whether political, organisational and external, as well as the behaviours associated with understanding whole problems, designing an end to end service experience, involving the public, working across organisational boundaries and working in an agile way. Finally, the availability of a wide range of different enabling resources and technology play a significant role in determining the quality of experience and outcomes for citizens, businesses and visitors as well as the speed with which government is able to transform its service landscape.

Figure 5.1. A conceptual framework for analysing the design and delivery of services

Source: OECD, (2020[1]), Digital Government in Chile – Improving public service design and delivery.
Chapter 2 has discussed the contextual factors shaping digital government in a country. In the context of designing and delivering public services, these remain relevant. Although a governmental focus on the quality of service design and delivery is arguably politically neutral, its success is as reliant on political stability and commitment as any other agenda. Financial priorities in a country may create a sudden impetus to move interactions online with the explicit aim of reducing face-to-face provision without considering the opportunity to transform the design and delivery culture. Indeed, this in itself will reflect the extent to which a country might mandate a particular approach from the centre versus local or regional autonomy.

Further influences will come from the legacy of how services were established with their associated processes, data flows and channels not always being the product of strategic planning while different priorities may have resulted in the development of different channels without coordination, or in competition, between organisations meaning users have to visit multiple locations to address a particular need. Legacies of politics, physical infrastructure, data, technology, channels, brands or supplier contracts all influence the speed and capability of a public sector in pursuing its ambitions for transforming public services.

From the citizen side, questions of digital inclusion and particularly access and literacy should also be recognised in terms of how services are designed and delivered. Web, telephone and face to face locations need to be understood together in order to ensure that services are developed in such a way that users can access a given service at any point in the process of meeting their need, according to their most convenient channel.

As a result, OECD countries are increasingly exploring unifying strategies for the design and delivery of services and rationalising their public sector web estates. Slovenia is no different in having begun to consolidate all corporate government information on GOV.SI (https://www.gov.si), which has cut down the number of administrative websites from 350 to 30 (European Commission, 2019[20]). This site is then complemented by eUpirava (https://e-uprava.gov.si/) as an intended single entry point for accessing services and transactions. However, although eUpirava is the most significant channel for providing access to services, its relationship with GOV.SI is not always clear while the situation regarding service delivery is complicated by a legacy of institutional or sectoral websites and the provision made available face to face through physical locations. The eUpirava website and GOV.SI websites are just two parts of landscape for accessing services and information ranging from companies (http://evem.gov.si), taxes
GOV.SI and eUprava reflect an initial statement of intent by the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) and Slovenian government to simplify the user experience of accessing services but there remains more to do in order to align the citizen user experience and provide joined-up services across government. A dependency on outsourcing (discussed in Chapter 4) and limited access to human resources affects the capacity for change while the external provision of many services and the associated procurement culture does not readily encourage innovation meaning that this challenge may seem insurmountable.

As discussed in Chapter 3, efforts are underway to address the procurement culture and political support for transformation is increasing. These can complement efforts to map and understand how different channels and organisations operate and interact to identify opportunities for partnership and explore routes to consolidation that can involve pooling resources. One area that could be prioritised is the interaction between central and municipal government provided services. Although Slovenia is a small country and the centre enjoys significant influence over local government there has not yet been extensive cooperation to include local public services within eUprava or concerted efforts to support the use of service design and delivery enablers at a municipal level. Countries are exploring this partnership between central and local service provision in different ways. For example, in Panama there is extensive central provision of common platforms to support local government while in Spain, local governments are legally recognised as essential participants in the governance for digital transformation (OECD, 2020[29]; OECD, 2019[14]).

PHILOSOPHY OF SERVICE DESIGN AND DELIVERY

As highlighted in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014[1]), leadership and political commitment are essential for the success of digital government efforts and this is particularly true for service design and delivery. It is important for elected representatives, their appointees and senior government officials to share a vision for transforming services so that they are proactive, user-driven and maximise the use of data and modern technology. That transformation relies on embedding a service design and delivery culture and modelling the associated good practices.

Designing services is a practical exercise in working with those affected by a problem and adding value to their lives. If someone using a service gets confused, makes a mistake, or ultimately decides to abandon their efforts to use it then that increases the burden on the citizen to deal with the issue they had in the first place. The most effective citizen experiences should lead users through simple to complete processes that, where possible, reuse data to anticipate and proactively address aspects that might otherwise have involve further interactions. To do this requires understanding the whole problem, which means working with those needing to use the service. It also means bringing all those involved with design (including both policy and service perspectives), delivery and operations together in diverse, multi-disciplinary teams to ensure a common vision and coordinated development process so that what might otherwise be siloes work as a single team, focused on solving a particular problem together. Finally, it becomes important to adopt agile approaches that embrace uncertainty, continuous learning and improvement in order to keep adding value to the public and keeping them engaged (Figure 5.2).

The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014[1]) identifies the need to encourage engagement and participation of public, private and civil society stakeholders in policy making and public service design and delivery. That is complemented by the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (OECD, 2017[13]) which calls on governments to move towards a “culture of governance that promotes the principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth”. These ideas are strongly evidenced in Slovenia’s long-standing commitment to Open Government Data and in the work of stopbirokraciji.gov.si (Stop Bureaucracy). Work began on the removal of administrative burden in 2005 and the website
was launched in 2013. This service provides a single point of access for all stakeholders to contribute their ideas for improving services in the context of legislation or the business environment. Nevertheless, Stop Bureaucracy highlights one of the areas where Slovenia could focus further efforts. This single site is focused on administrative simplification as prompted by the concerns of the public rather than reflecting an ongoing strategic approach to the design and delivery of services more broadly.

Although teams within the Slovenian government are recognising the need for design approaches and the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 (Ministry of Public Administration, 2015[11]) advocated for such an approach, this culture is not yet established at an institutional level with only 6 institutions having a formal strategy related to the design, delivery and evaluation of government services (OECD, 2020[7]). Where these ideas have gained traction organisations are working together to understand user journeys across organisational boundaries with more than half of the surveyed organisations coordinating with others to design and deliver services through design sessions and focus groups.

Slovenia has been exploring the role of the internet in delivering services for many years and this is visible in the technological underpinnings to services in the country. However, many of the organisations are following a technology-driven, rather than user-driven approach to solving problems in the country with conspicuous gaps in their language and practice of working to understand the needs and experiences of users, whether qualitatively through user research or quantitatively through data analytics.

The GOV.SI and eUprava teams are enthusiastic about working in a user-driven fashion and there is a willingness amongst stakeholders to cooperate. Slovenia’s excellent record in working in the open to develop its Open Government Data agenda and partner with those outside government provides a model that can be emulated for the design and delivery of services. As funding and human resources are constrained it is important to be able to make a strong case for investment to evolve the approach to services. To this end, a pilot service could be identified as an exemplar to build experience, model behaviours and measure the benefits of working in a user-driven, collaborative and agile way.

ENABLERS TO SUPPORT SERVICE DESIGN AND DELIVERY

When countries have thousands of individual services to provide it is slow, expensive and inefficient to redesign and rethink each of those individually. Therefore, a ‘Government as a Platform’ ecosystem of enablers is fundamental for helping to meet the needs of users at scale, and with pace, while protecting quality and trust. This holistic ecosystem should support and equip public servants and encourage collaboration with citizens, businesses, civil society and others to transform the process by which services are designed and delivered. This is particularly true in a country like Slovenia, which despite having a small population, must still provide the same services as any other country.

Common components are often the focus of efforts to establish enablers for service design and delivery and Slovenia has a good record in this respect, especially in working closely with the European Union to align technologies and embrace initiatives such as those associated with interoperability and digital identity.
This recognition of the value of cross-border service provision sits behind some of the efforts to develop central platforms that can simplify the integration effort for service teams and unify the user experience. In terms of digital identity, Slovenia has had authentication and e-signature via digital certification since 2000 but is now actively prioritising the development of SI-PASS as a mobile based solution that will provide full identification, electronic signature and authentication to its users and gradually replace the legacy certificate approach. The Slovenian State Cloud (DRO) infrastructure provides secure and robust hosting for upwards of 400 different information systems in Slovenia and is regarded as a strong asset by many institutions.

Enabling service design and delivery is about more than technology. Guidance can help to scale digital transformation by sharing best practices and providing a framework for quality assurance. In Slovenia, the Guidelines for Information Solutions Development (Republic of Slovenia, 2018[^22]) are an important contribution and complement other materials such as the Manual for the Opening of Public Sector Information (Ministry of Public Administration, 2016[^23]). While some parts of the Slovenian public sector are aware of these reference materials, their adoption has stalled given the fluctuating political situation in the country in recent years. One of the casualties of the associated change in political priorities has been the Slovenian business case model. Although this model has a clear expectation that any ICT project with a budget of over 20 000 EUR would align with strategies concerning digital identity, interoperability, cloud computing, cybersecurity and other standards in service design and delivery in practice the OECD mission heard that this was not currently enforced (see Section Coordination and Compliance and Section Management Tools). As such, Slovenia does not currently have an established assurance process to guarantee that service teams are following technical guidelines or standards that could also be complemented by exploring how to emphasise the involvement of users and champion design thinking.

A final area of enablers that were observed during the mission to Ljubljana are those concerning digital inclusion. Building successful links between digital government, digital infrastructure and the digital economy agendas should be a priority and it was encouraging to hear that while this had not always been the case, steps were now being taken to align this critical area of work and ensure comprehensive internet coverage for the entire country. Alongside addressing the question of getting people online there remains a need to support citizens with the necessary training. A particularly effective area of work has been the partnership with Simbioza, a volunteer based civil society organisation that has provided courses, workshops and support throughout the country. Slovenia is fortunate to have networks of enthusiastic volunteers providing support but this is not sustainable in the longer term and highlights the importance of the digital skills and digital literacy discussions highlighted in Chapter 4.
6. Data-Driven Public Sector

Data as a resource has the potential to add significant value to society. However, turning that promise into tangible, measurable and consistent outcomes has often proven elusive. The Open, Useful and Re-usable (OURdata) Index: 2019 (OECD, 2020[24]) shows that there has been clear and demonstrable progress in terms of Open Government Data across OECD countries but this is not matched by as comprehensive, or coherent, an approach to the rest of the data available to the public sector to support digital transformation.

In response to the challenges facing countries in adopting a whole of government approach to developing coherent and comprehensive models of data governance that help to deliver public value while being efficient, transparent and trustworthy in their use of data the OECD published The Path to Becoming a Data-Driven Public Sector report (OECD, 2019[16]). This calls on countries to adopt a three-pronged approach to unleashing the potential benefit of data, whether open or closed (Figure 6.1). First, a comprehensive model of data governance for government as a whole, and within individual organisations, that strategically covers leadership and vision; tactically addresses the capacities for coherent implementation and the necessary rules, laws, guidelines and standards; and operationally ensures the necessary data architecture and infrastructure to support the generation, collection, storage, processing, publication, sharing and re-use of data. Second, applying data to generate public value through anticipation and planning, delivery and in evaluation and monitoring. Finally, the role of data in public trust concerning ethics, privacy and consent, transparency and security.

Figure 6.1. The facets of a Data-Driven Public Sector

Source: OECD, (2019[16]), The Path to Becoming a Data-Driven Public Sector
DATA GOVERNANCE IN SLOVENIA

Data governance is a critical foundation for the strategic role of data in the public sector. The success, or otherwise, of these foundations will determine the extent to which a country, and its citizens, businesses or visitors might benefit from data.

As Figure 6.2 shows, this wide-ranging topic considers strategic, tactical and operational activities. Although there is usually evidence of these dimensions within a country, it is rare to find a holistic and coordinated approach across the board. For data to be an effective resource for the public sector this approach to governance needs to cover the activity of government in general as well as the approaches of individual organisations and individuals to enshrine a data-driven culture within government.

Slovenia’s record in terms of open government data (OGD) is strong with strategic, tactical and operational elements all being well recognised. There is a particularly strong legal and regulatory underpinning for OGD through the Access to Public Information Act (Republic of Slovenia, 2003[26]) and the country was one of the most improved of all, ranking 10th, in the 2019 edition of the OECD Open, Useful and Re-usable (OURdata) Index (OECD, 2020[24]). However, in the case of a broader, more holistic approach to data governance there is room for improvement.

Slovenia does not have a single leading public sector organisation or individual role, such as a Chief Data Officer, at the centre of government with responsibility for coordinating the implementation of a data policy whilst only 7 of the 46 surveyed institutions indicated that they had such leadership themselves (OECD, 2019[9]; OECD, 2020[7]).

Figure 6.2. Data governance in the public sector

A. Leadership and vision
e.g. CDOs, Data policy (incl. data openness, access, sharing, security and protection), Data strategy (milestones, timeframes), policy levers.

B. Capacity for coherent implementation
e.g. Data committees, task forces, data stewards, skills and training, funding, experimentation and data innovation.

C. Regulation
e.g. Rules, guidelines, guides (e.g. for data publication, data sharing and interoperability)

D. Data value cycle
e.g. Actors, roles and technical skills. Data management (e.g. data validation, process reengineering, data sharing and integration, openness and reuse, data ownership and consent, bias and data integrity)

E. Data infrastructure
e.g. Data federation, data registers, data catalogues, data lakes, APIs, cloud-based solutions

F. Data architecture
e.g. Standards, reference data, interoperability, semantics, relationships

Source: OECD (2019[9]), Digital Government Review of Argentina
One of the implications of this is that Slovenia does not have a standalone data strategy as a focal point for the conversation about data in the country. This gap may be linked to a majority of the surveyed institutions feeling that the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) has not been active in assessing data needs, challenges or capabilities. At a more practical level, the lack of awareness for the role of data among the civil service at all levels as well as a lack of formal support for its increased use was identified as a strong barrier. Certainly, while there have been interventions concerning skills related to data, a more strategic approach to developing the capacities for coherent implementation has not been a priority. This may be another casualty of the shifting political leadership in the country (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 and 3). Slovenia can use the experience of successfully championing OGD to address the gaps in overall leadership for data. This effort is needed particularly in the strategic and tactical dimensions of the data governance model. In developing any new data strategy, the collaborative model underpinning the development of the Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 (Ministry of Public Administration, 2015[11]) be repeated to ensure ownership.

The Public Administration Development Strategy 2015-2020 (Ministry of Public Administration, 2015[19]) acknowledged the importance of data in the context of interoperability to support more effective services. This is consistent with strong efforts in Slovenia to address questions of data infrastructure and architecture. As seen in the conversation about design and delivery of services in the country Slovenia has had strong technology leadership and important efforts to provide guidelines and set standards. More than half of the surveyed institutions reported having a data inventory while a strong set of registers (including population, registered vehicles and businesses amongst others) is complemented by a very well established and advanced interoperability agenda including the Pladenj platform and National Interoperability Framework Portal (https://nio.gov.si).
APPLYING DATA TO UNLOCK PUBLIC VALUE

The purpose of achieving effective data governance is to allow a country to unlock the public value associated with the use, and re-use of data. In moving from governance and technical implementation into application the associated opportunities fall into three categories of anticipation and planning, delivery, and evaluation and monitoring. As shown in Figure 6.3, these are connected and reinforcing behaviours.

Slovenia was ranked 10th in the Open, Useful and Re-usable (OURdata) Index: 2019 (OECD, 2020[24]) and the national open data portal (https://podatki.gov.si) is a rich source of data re-use that is supported by a healthy ecosystem of conferences and events. The OECD mission heard of good examples of focused OGD release and re-use for example in terms of supporting Slovenia’s tourism industry. This collaborative culture is a valuable asset that sets an important model for other parts of the government to aspire to replicate. There is also a strong record within government institutions of having embedded OGD thinking and practice in the sharing and re-use of data in terms of public access.

Although there was evidence of data usage throughout the cycle, it was most evident from a delivery point of view where Slovenia benefits from the effective provision of various registers as well as valuable technical building blocks such as Pladenj, the interoperability platform. Pladenj provides a reliable, simple and secure route for exchanging data between different organisations that reconciles different data sources and is critical to enabling the ‘once only’ principle of not requesting information from users that is already held within government. This relies on the National Interoperability Framework and specifically the Semantic Interoperability Implementation Strategy (Republic of Slovenia, 2018[27]). Around half of the public sector organisations surveyed indicated that there is also a healthy eco-system of data sharing and re-use within government with 27 running services using data supplied from elsewhere in government, and 22 collecting data that is then used to deliver services elsewhere in government (OECD, 2020[7]).

The MPA has been exploring how Business Intelligence tools and the Skrinja Data Warehouse, MPA is taking steps to explore how big data approaches can be used to support Slovenia in the context of HR to improve efficiency, develop organisational capacity and enhance staff satisfaction. Data related to public sector salaries are currently in a testing phase with data on public sector procurement due to be included by the end of 2020. Nevertheless, the possibilities of data-driven anticipation

Figure 6.3. Where data-driven public sector approaches can generate public value

1. Real-time data provides insight into delivery and opportunities to improve
2. Without delivery there is nothing to evaluate. It is critical to set benchmarks and establish performance baselines

Source: OECD, (2019[16]), The Path to Becoming a Data-Driven Public Sector
and planning or evaluation and monitoring appear less well established in general. For example, only 13 public sector organisations are actively capturing performance data about their transactional services suggesting that any new public sector data strategy could be usefully accompanied by materials helping to communicate the value proposition for data and the resources to conduct cost benefit analysis to justify investment (OECD, 2020).

From a technical and regulatory point of view, Slovenia has the right foundations in place to see the flow of data throughout the public sector deriving significant internal value for the functioning of government as well as public value in the use and re-use of data to design better policy and services. The challenge is in encouraging and incentivising public servants to put data to use. It is perhaps instructive to consider the differing experiences of OGD compared to the use of other data in Slovenia.

In recent years, Slovenia has developed training in the use of data to develop and stimulate data-driven approaches to policymaking and service delivery whether for upfront forecasting using big data or for ongoing analysis of service performance. Training in OGD has looked to embed a basic understanding of its concepts and develop the capacity of civil servants to open data, an approach complemented by the Manual for the opening of public sector information (Ministry of Public Administration, 2016). While training has covered both topics, the skills, support and understanding necessary to benefit from its potential was more evident for OGD than other data. Although a gap in non-OGD related skills was identified and training implemented, it has not achieved the same impact as measures to support OGD perhaps because it has not benefited from the same level of institutional support in terms of developing a strategy, an action plan or accompanying guidance.

A further area of opportunity relates to Slovenia’s impressive innovation and research culture around the emerging technologies of artificial intelligence and blockchain, for which data are essential component parts. Partnerships with academia can be a valuable way to draw in external expertise and stimulate research that can address the needs of government. One example of such collaboration is in the work of the University of Ljubljana to develop a working prototype of a Slovenian language Semantic Text Analyser to compare structured and unstructured texts to analyse their meaning. The aim is for it to be in use for preparing and updating vocabularies and to improve fast reading of governmental (and other) documents by the end of 2021.
DATA FOR TRUST

The public discourse around the use of data is incomplete if it does not acknowledge that data can be exploited and misused. In the context of the public sector, citizens and businesses have high expectations over how personal and sensitive data are handled with any failings having a detrimental impact on public trust. As such, if governments wish to ensure that efforts to maximise the public value of data build, rather than diminish trust, then transparency, ethics, privacy and consent, and security cannot be optional.

Trust is a particularly critical issue in Slovenia. Figure 6.4 shows that of all the countries analysed by the Gallup World Poll (Gallup, 2018[28]), Slovenia has experienced the most significant decline in confidence in national government with a 24 percentage point decline since 2007. This is despite a strong legal basis for openness in terms of access to public information (Republic of Slovenia, 2003[26]), impressive OGD work including published data about procurement and public sector salaries and several websites seeking public influence over government including stopbirokraciji.gov.si (Stop Bureaucracy) and predlagam.vladi.si (I Propose).

Slovenia is home to many businesses working with Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain. These are both areas in which access to high quality data is critical but equally areas where the question of trust is important. As an OECD member country, Slovenia endorses the Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence (OECD, 2019[29]) that proposes values-based principles recommendations for policy makers but has not yet enacted additional initiatives such as the Loi Lemaire for algorithmic transparency in France or a model for Algorithmic Impact Assessment such as that found in Canada (OECD, 2019[16]). In Slovenia, only three organisations (the Information Commissioner, the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia and the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning) have implemented initiatives to provide transparency and accountability on algorithms used for public decision-making (OECD, 2020[7]). However, the country is one of the participants in the OECD Working Party of Senior Digital Government Officials Thematic

Figure 6.4. Confidence in national government in 2018 and its change since 2007

Source: Gallup, (2018[28]), Gallup World Poll
Group on the Data-Driven Public Sector, which in 2020 is developing guidelines on data ethics in the public sector and sharing good practices on their implementation.

Slovenia benefits from the collective efforts of European Union member countries to address cross-cutting issues such as those associated with data protection and rights. The European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (European Union, 2016[30]) has shifted expectations in Europe, and around the world, for how personal data is treated. Reflecting its provisions, Slovenian law enshrines these legal protections alongside existing Freedom of Information legislation with the country’s Information Commissioner as the Supervisory Authority. Although institutions were clearly aware of their responsibilities under GDPR there is lag in terms of enabling citizens and businesses to express their rights in practice with 19 organisations reporting that it is not yet possible. Nevertheless, as the country has the necessary foundations for interoperability and is building momentum behind its implementation of digital identity there will be an opportunity to explore how citizens and businesses can be given greater visibility, and control, over how their data is being used.

Digital security has been an evident priority for the Slovenian public sector with a majority of public sector organisations having a strategy in place and a subject matter expert often joining the interviews carried out during the peer review mission to Ljubljana. This is reflective of two pieces of legislation from 2018 in the Regulation on Information Security in Public Administration (Republic of Slovenia, 2018[31]) and the Information Security Act (Republic of Slovenia, 2018[32]).

As Slovenia develops its design and delivery culture to embrace proactive, user and data-driven services then it will be important to pair the country’s robust approach to information security with citizen-led efforts on ethics, consent and transparency. A valuable actor in achieving this will be the Information Commissioner whose active role as the supervisory body for FOI and GDPR reflects a trusted presence in Slovenian society and who can apply that knowledge to helping ensure that data and emerging technologies are used to build trust.

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This digital government review assesses the state of data-driven policies and initiatives in the Swedish public sector. It explores the underlying institutional governance and co-ordination arrangements for digital government in the country, and their impact on policy implementation. It also discusses data-sharing and managing initiatives, data governance and open government data practices. The review looks at how Sweden could better share knowledge, promote innovation and improve collaboration both across the public sector and with external stakeholders. Finally, it highlights how the government can use data to build a closer relationship with citizens in order to address policy challenges, improve public service delivery, and, ultimately, strengthen public trust.

ISBN 978-92-64-45055-4
Consult this publication on line at https://doi.org/10.1787/4daf932b-en.
This work is published on the OECD iLibrary, which gathers all OECD books, periodicals and statistical databases. Visit www.oecd-ilibrary.org for more information.

This publication is a contribution to the OECD Going Digital project which aims to provide policymakers with the tools they need to help their economies and societies prosper in an increasingly digital and data-driven world.
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